



**MONTANA
AMERICAN INDIAN
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January 14, 2009

Montana American Indian Caucus
61st Session of the Montana Legislature

Dear Senate Local Government Committee:

The American Indian Caucus of the 61st Session of the Montana Legislature respectfully opposes Senate Bill 8 (SB 8) sponsored by Senator Kim Hansen. SB8 authorizes a charter form of government for regional water entities, and allows for the creation of regional resource authorities; granting a regional resource authority of self-governing powers.

One of the main concerns expressed by the Montana American Indian Caucus is that SB 8 in its current form presents vague sections that may cause unintended consequences for tribal jurisdictions. Also, there are already four (4) Regional Water Systems in Montana that perform the following duties: 1). Maintain contacts with the local system authorities; 2). Administer state grants to the regional water authorities; 3). Ensure participation by State agencies involved in review and/or implementation; 4). Provide liaison work to tribal and federal governmental agencies; and 5). Provide a contact for those with questions about regional water. The bill would create more governmental bureaucracy where local, state, tribal, and federal participation is already being coordinated.

We already have in place Water Conservancy, Irrigation, and Drainage Districts that impact the water use in Montana. Therefore, we feel that SB 8 isn't necessary in light of the thorough and coordinated efforts that are currently taking place in a crowded structure. We urge your opposition to Senate Bill 8 and extend our appreciation for your time and consideration in this matter. Thank you.

Sincerely,


Rep. Shannon Augare, Chairman
Montana American Indian Caucus

SENATE LOCAL GOVERNMENT

EXHIBIT NO. 6

DATE 1.14.09

BILL NO. SB 8